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ABSTRACT

This document suggests ways in which competency based education (CBE) offers a productive direction for education in a society of rapid environmental change. Part one discusses as a primary mission of the teacher providing a positive and affectionate model for children who have experienced little personal interaction at home. It also defines the individualized instruction of CBE as compatible in such a teaching situation. Part two illustrates the variety of data available to the individual and suggests that each student must be able to move forward at his own rate in different subject and skill areas. The study urges that: (a) the concept of graduation be deemphasized, (b) continuing education is a necessity in a society of advancing technologies, and (c) education should be available seven days a week on a 24-hour basis. It also notes that the independent study and modular concepts of CBE fit in well with such an educational reorganization. Part three discusses the future training of teachers emphasizing: (a) the importance of personal style, (b) the possible use of microteaching sessions to develop teaching techniques, and (c) problems and their solutions concerning CBE and certification. (JS)

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COMPETENCY BASED EDUCATION:

THE EMERGING CENTER OF LEADERSHIP

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Education is faced with formidable new challenges being forced upon it by rapidly expanding bodies of knowledge and technology, and the resulting social and psychological stresses:

> The people who must live in super-industrial societies will need new skills in three crucial areas: learning, relating and choosing. (Toffler, 1971, p. 414)

> Education must shift into the future tense. (Toffler, 1971, p. 427)

This paper suggests ways in which competency based education (hereafter denoted "CBE") represents a productive direction for education in the context of rapid environmental change.

The Social Vortex

The challenge to the United States, and therefore to education, in the near future is going to be coping with rapid change, and the social and psychological consequences of rapid change:

> We may define future shock as the distress, both physical and psychological, that arises from an overload of the human organism's physical adaptive processes. Put more simply, future shock

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is the human response to overstimulation.

> Different people react to future shock in different ways. Its symptoms also vary according to the stage and intensity of the disease. These systems range all the way from anxiety, hostility to helpful authority, and seemingly senseless violence, to physical illness, depression and apathy. Its victims often manifest erratic swings in interest and life style, followed by an effort to "crawl into their shells" through social, intellectual and emotional withdrawal. They feel continually "bugged" or harassed, and want desperately to reduce the number of decisions they must make. (Toffler, 1971, p. 326)

Along with rapid change accompanying rapidly advancing technologies comes increasing depersonalization and loss of individual visibility:

> What this means is that we form limited involvement relationships with most of the people around us. Consciously or not, we define our relationships with most people in functional terms. So long as we do not become involved with the shoe salesman's problems at home, or his more general hopes, dreams and frustrations, he is, for us, fully interchangeable with any other shoe salesman of equal competence. In effect, we have applied the modular principle to human relationships. We have created the disposable person: Modular Man. (Toffler, 1971, p. 97)

The apparent loss of personal identity and visibility is very frightening to anyone. Sumpter Brooks has characterized one rebound to ethnic identity in the United States:

> Out of these ashes was born a new black pupil into the public schools of the nation. He has asked questions that had never before been asked; he has made demands that had never before been made; he has behaved in ways that had never before been contemplated. He flaunted his newly found identity in the streets of this nation by singing aloud, "I am myself; I am Black and I am beautiful; I am Black and I am proud; and I am the descendant of beautiful people." The noise from his chants awoke a "new monster," a giant. This new monster was <u>not</u> <u>black</u>; he was multiracial. (Brooks, 1974, p. 6)

The immediate implications for the teacher's role are arresting:

> The public schools are, probably, the only places where children from every socioethnic and sociocultural background converge for common causes. (Brooks, 1974, p. 2)

> We can also anticipate increasing difficulty in making and maintaining rewarding human ties, if life pace continues its acceleration. (Toffler, 1971, p. 415)

A perceptive teacher will often find himself listening to facts, but hearing the need for touch and for personhood. Since more and more often both parents are working, and youngsters are spending smaller fractions of their days within the home, parenting and befriending students, serving as the desperately sought positive models and providing affectionate personal interaction are likely to develop shortly into the primary missions of teachers. This would fit in well with the individualized instruction of CBE, but will require a lower student-to-teacher ratio. Noting current trends in marriage and the home, the school could well become most youngsters' main emotional base. Teaching will become primarily a rationale for getting together for the higher purpose of relationship, and secondarily a means of communicating skills and information. Teachers need to be prepared for this evolution, a very high calling indeed.

Rapid environmental change compounds these already present challenges:

> By speeding the turnover of people in our lives, we allow less time for trust to develop, less time for friendships to ripen. Thus we witness a search for ways to cut through the polite "public" behavior directly to the sharing of intimacy. (Toffler, 1971, p. 415)

In order to deal with new concepts and modes of relating and the development of relationships, teachers are going to find themselves quickly in the arena of values:

> Adaptation involves the making of successive choices. Presented with numerous alternatives, an individual chooses the one most compatible with his values. As overchoice deepens, the person who lacks a clear grasp of his own values (whatever these may be) is progressively crippled. Yet the more crucial the question of values becomes, the less willing our present schools are to grapple with it. It is no wonder that millions of young people trace erratic pathways into the future, ricocheting this way and that like unguided missiles. (Toffler, 1971, p. 416)

Handling <u>that</u> is going to call forth higher orders of objective democratic process--political excellence beyond any nation's present grasp. New levels of consciousness and philosophical sophistication will be required for orderly development of these processes, and education (in a more encompassing sense than usual) will be the key to these social, mental and spiritual expansions.

The Knowledge Explosion

Exercise of old knowledge produces new knowledge; the greater the knowledge base, the greater the rate of knowledge increase. We have entered an era where the doubling rate of knowledge is so great that new ways of teaching, storing,

retrieving, routing, organizing, communicating and processing it must immediately be developed.

> To avert future shock, we must create a super-industrial education system. And to do this, we must search for our objectives and methods in the future, rather than the past. (Toffler, 1971, p. 399)

The convenience and comfort of the standard school curriculum is now an unaffordable luxury. There must be no wasted time, effort or subjects:

> As for curriculum, the Councils of the Future, instead of assuming that every subject taught today is taught for a reason, should begin from the reverse premise: nothing should be included in a required curriculum unless it can be strongly justified in terms of the future. If this means scrapping a substantial part of the formal curriculum, so be it.
>
> This is not intended as an "anti-cultural" statement or a plea for total destruction of the past. Nor does it suggest that we can ignore such basics as reading, writing and math. What it does mean is that tens of millions of children today are forced by law to spend precious hours of their lives grinding away at material whose future utility is highly questionable. (Nobody even claims it has much present utility.) (Toffler, 1971, pp. 409-410)

With the mushrooming array of selections informed choices are going to have to be made by young people earlier:

> The futurist movement in education must attempt to create widely diversified data offerings. Children should be permitted far greater choice than at present; they should be encouraged to taste a wide variety of short-term courses (perhaps two or three weeks in length) before making longer-term commitments. Each school should provide scores of optional subjects, all based on identifiable assumptions about future needs. (Toffler, 1971, p. 412)

Even prompt action on feedback from present operations will no longer be adequate:

> For education the lesson is clear: its prime objective must be to increase the individual's "cope-ability"--the speed and economy with which he can adapt to continual change. And the faster the rate of change, the more attention must be devoted to discerning the pattern of future events... Johnny must learn to anticipate the directions and rate of change. He must, to put it technically, learn to make repeated, probabilistic, increasingly long-range assumptions about the future. And so must Johnny's teachers. (Toffler, 1971, p. 403)

The long range changes predicted in the nature of instruction, the role of the teacher and the organization of schools have been developed and documented. (Brooks, 1974, pp. 17-21)

A first step would be to break the present lock-step mode of progression at the elementary and secondary levels with CBE. To keep up with and utilize such a rapidly expanding data base, it must soon be possible for Johnny to move forward at varying rates in different subject and skill areas. Johnny must be permitted to accelerate in his strong areas so that, for example, he might be working toward attainment of eleventh grade verbal proficiency while completing a doctorate in physics at a nearby university. This would require cooperation and coordination among coalitions of institutions--which exponents of CBE rightly envision. It must not be required (as at present) that Johnny excel in all academic areas in order to make early contributions in a single area.

Similarly, Johnny should not be denied a high school diploma solely because he has difficulty with mathematical

thinking, for example. If Johnny exhibits facility with spatial relations and commanding skills as a craftsman or machinist, he should be permitted recognition for that excellence, and society must be educated to accord those skills proper status. (We do not now deny diplomas for unsatisfactory work on a lathe!)

Johnny should be able to go from apprentice training through his school on into employment or his own business while satisfying requirements for credit in, say, mathematics at perhaps the ninth grade level. CBE would facilitate this. His transcript would simply indicate the levels of proficiency he has reached in each area, and Johnny would get his diploma without apology. Further, it should be possible for Johnny, if he wishes, to continue supervised work to advance his mathematical proficiency--and have an additional entry made to that effect on his transcript (after "graduation").

The concept of graduation should be de-emphasized. Coping with exploding technologies is going to require <u>continuing</u> education for almost everybody, and not just in the traditional academic areas (or even primarily in those areas). Consider the new ethical, legal, religious and philosophical problems that are rapidly being created by the advent of such things as organ transplants, new thinking on abortion, euthanasia, behavior modification and work in human genetics. Coping is going to require advances and improved skills in the affective dynamics of the human psyche and not just the cognitive. Religious experience may well emerge as the undergirding,

unifying principle for secular man in the mind-boggling environments that are now upon us.

Continuing education is going to require new flexibilities in schools and universities. The independent study and modular concepts of CBE fit in well with such a reorganization.

Many people who would otherwise advance their education do not do so because they cannot abandon or compromise their jobs by being on a campus Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 10 o'clock and again at 3 o'clock. Education could rather quickly convert now to a 7-day, 24-hour basis. Cooperating learning centers could remain open continuously to issue materials, proctor written exams (perhaps left by professors as agreed with the student over the telephone) and act generally as a mediator between professors and students. If class attendance can cease to be a primary requirement (as it will with CBE), then individuals could utilize 30 minutes here, an hour there wherever they are, and efficiently progress toward educational goals. On completing published prerequisites, the student would then arrange to attend seminars, where appropriate, cycled at a variety of times to put them within reach of nearly everyone. Some conferring with professors over assessments, essays and research papers submitted could be conducted over the telephone. Time spent with professors would be less, but much more personal and intense. The professor, no longer expected to appear in a room and talk for many hours a week would be free to utilize his time more efficiently as well.

Teams of eminent professors could produce groups of modules and all sorts of resource material--videotapes, example problems, texts designed for independent study--to go with them. These materials would be available (in place of most lectures and class meetings) everywhere in the country thus eliminating the present astronomical duplication of effort. Teachers at all levels would have many competing groups of modules on the market to choose from for the courses and students to be supervised. Of course no one CBE pattern is going to make sense for all disciplines, but at least some CBE protocols would be quite suitable for any one discipline.

Future Training of Teachers

There are similarities in the observed teaching styles of effective teachers; method varies within that style:

> Good and poor teachers can be discriminated on the basis of the methods they use. This is not to say that there are "good" or "right" methods. Quite the contrary, the important thing about methods seems to be the authenticity or "fit" of the method to the teacher who is using it and the peculiar circumstances in which he is working. This is a personal matter that has to do with the teacher's discovery of the peculiar methods he needs to use to carry out his own and society's purposes. (Combs & Kinzer, 1974, p. 176)

CBE microteaching labs acquaint the teacher candidate with techniques and methods of demonstrated worth on which the candidate can draw as he grows more confident and develops his own unique style while actually teaching on the job--and there is no substitute for the real thing:

> Since methods of teaching are personal ways of using self, they cannot be given; they need to be discovered. Teachers colleges formerly often regarded their task as one of teaching students "good" or "right" methods, generally derived from observation of expert teachers in action. In the light of what now seems evident from research, such prescriptive tactics are likely to be only partially effective. Methods, we now understand, are highly personal and must be deeply related to the teacher's own beliefs, purposes, and conditions for action. This calls for a cafeteria approach to methods, in which students are given wide opportunities to confront all kinds of possible methods and are encouraged and assisted in trying out and modifying teaching techniques to fit the peculiar combination of characteristics of self, students, and the surroundings in which they may find themselves. (Combs & Kinzer, 1974, p. 181)

Once the more objective competencies and classroom methods which lend themselves to measurement are acquired, the candidate should be granted a certificate. The teaching preparation to be done before starting a full-time teaching assignment can and should be kept to an absolute minimum:

> Some students are much more ready at the beginning of their program to take on full-time teaching than some students will be at the end... Teacher education programs should be so constructed that students can move through them at different speeds depending on their own readiness to begin and how quickly they can acquire the qualities that will make them effective practitioners. (Combs & Kinzer, 1974, pp. 181-182)

The capacities for rewarding interpersonal interaction are a product of the totality of one's life experiences and one's view of self and of others. If the necessary emotional and conceptual elements are there in the candidate, very little formal training is necessary or appropriate. If those elements are not there, no university curriculum of reasonable scope and duration is going to put them there.

Teaching and learning occur within a process of mutual actualization:

> If teaching works itself out idiosyncratically and is a consequence of a personal interaction between a teacher who is actualizing himself and a pupil who is actualizing himself, then the problem of assessment actually defies solution by definition. There can be no standard measure of teaching competence because that is the ability to enter into a unique relationship with a student. There can be no standard measure of student performance because that is idiosyncratic both to the student and to the teacher. Thus the product of a phenomenological approach cannot be compared in any way to the product of the the competency orientation, which assumes that the ends and means of education can be determined in advance and the roles and thus the competencies of the teacher can also be derived in advance (from an analysis of those roles). Combs and his associates oppose the competency based teacher education movement precisely because it depends on the selection of teaching competencies. (Joyce, 1974, p. 197)

But CBE for teacher certification need not contemplate the measurement of actualization, and the fact that the measurement of such things were not undertaken would not be tantamount to saying they do not exist, but only that they could not (at least at that time) be effectively measured.

Whether or not a teacher produced adequate learning and actualization between himself and his students would be an estimate that the principal or other supervisors would make during a first-year, probationary internship.

Screening out of some candidates unlikely to have the necessary positive concepts and capacity to relate to others might be accomplished in human relations labs with peers and planned interactions with groups of children before the candidate has invested much time in teacher training.

Concerning CBE for teachers it is further objected that:

> CBTE/PBTE programs, if consistent, should be arguing that such theoretical understandings can be reduced to overt performances or that they are unnecessary. I believe that the first option is based on a serious mistake about the nature of knowledge, the second on a serious error as to what are the culture demands of teachers. One can, of course, evade this dilemma by labeling the theoretical components of the conventional program as performances whether or not they can be reduced to overt observable behaviors. In this way one gains the political benefits of CBTE/PBTE with little risk. This is transubstantiation by semantic incantation. (Broudy, 1974, p. 64)

Since work within the school of education by the teacher candidate is a small fraction of the total academic work done, training of teachers with CBE methods need not produce narrow technicians. In addition to certifying a thorough curriculum in subjects to be taught, the particular school of education would be simply checking specific, measurable competencies for certification with no representation that those competencies completed the teacher. All the sophistication and culture and breadth of liberal education in all departments of a university (including education) would still be available to the teaching candidate, and a reasonable sampling required of him. That is, CBE as a general concept does not restrict education nor does it necessarily change what is to be measured; it rather makes public in advance the criteria for acceptable performance in those measures, and holds the student responsible for meeting those criteria. Accordingly, the nature of the assessments is basically the same, but now achievement is the constant instead of time.

In the particular case of certification (as opposed to education) of teachers by schools of education, CBE would make a difference in what is assessed, but on the logical grounds that the basis for certification has changed. The more advanced courses taught in schools of education which are not part of the system of modules for teacher certification could be handled on a CBE basis just as a CBE course in philosophy or physics might be.

Conclusions

Centers of education will become the primary centers of national leadership and social interaction. CBE is a viable instrument for bringing about many of the changes that will enable education in general to dispatch the sweeping responsibilities soon to be vested in it. The teachers and educators who are ready will find themselves leading a nation.

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